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NOTES IN REPLY TO MY CRITIC.

THE last number of the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW contains a review of my book, *The Jewish Religion*, written by Mr. Claude Montefiore from the standpoint of Radicalism. The editors intimated to me that a reply would be welcome. I avail myself of the invitation, and propose to examine some of the criticisms passed on the book. In justice to Mr. Montefiore, I readily admit that he wrote the review *sine studio*, but to my regret I cannot add *et sine ira*. For had he written *sine ira*, he would not have been so inconsistent in the distribution of praise and blame, the two essential elements of a review. Whilst praise is lavished on me personally, the blame is mostly laid on the shoulders of orthodoxy. If I, *e.g.*, choose to call my work *The Jewish Religion*, why should all the orthodox be charged with the crime? Does Mr. Montefiore desire to imitate those barbarians who impute to the whole nation the crime committed by one individual? Or what is the meaning of the words, "That is naturally what orthodoxy claims to be. It cannot recognise any other phase of Judaism except its own"? (page 204). If this statement is correct, Mr. Montefiore is decidedly the most orthodox, every page of his article testifying to his inability to recognise any other opinion except his own.

There are other instances in which Mr. Montefiore attacks the orthodox rather than the author of *The Jewish Religion*. One of these may suffice. "For some time yet official orthodoxy will, I suppose, welcome gallant majors and colonels to preside at the distribution of prizes for proficiency in religious knowledge, while it will turn a cold shoulder to the gallant private, refusing to recognise in him a man who fulfils a 'national obligation'" (page 241).

I most positively deny the existence of any fact that could justify the latter part of this statement. Had the review been written *sine ira*, such an unjust and invidious charge would not have proceeded from the pen of Mr. Montefiore. There is not a word in the whole paragraph on Loyalty, or in any other part of my book, that could in the remotest way imply a recommendation of a major or colonel for the chair at a distribution of prizes. Nor have I personally anything to do with the appointment of chairmen for such occasions. But I declare that those who are responsible for the invitation of a major to distribute the prizes for proficiency in religious knowledge, can only be commended for having done so, and I have no doubt whatever that *cæteris paribus* a gallant private has in this respect as much chance as a gallant major.

Another striking feature of the review is the predominance of imagination, to the detriment of calm reasoning. Take, *e.g.*, the following passage:—"Why it is any satisfaction or excellence that there is no precept 'Thou shalt believe' it is very difficult to understand. The current opposition to a supposed fixed type of Christianity still makes itself felt in Dr. Friedländer's book (page 208)." In the first instance, nothing is said of satisfaction or excellence in the passage referred to. Secondly, the passage does not contain *my* view, but is distinctly introduced as an exposition of Moses Mendelssohn's theory. If the critic had been writing with strict objectiveness, as he no doubt intended to do, he would have stated that he criticised Mendelssohn and not my book. He would then not have had any occasion for lament that "the old Mendelssohnian theory has not been entirely got rid of." Although I differ from Mendelssohn, I cannot but speak with the greatest respect of the opinion of the Berlin Socrates, and think that his words are worth recording. My own view, that faith is an essential and indispensable element in Judaism, is repeatedly expressed in my book, and is the fountain from which every word in

it is drawn. Mr. Montefiore's quotation, "You cannot eat your cake and have it too," has thus been sent to the wrong address. Thirdly, the current opposition to a supposed fixed type of Christianity is a product of the critic's imagination. I had here not the slightest intention to oppose Christianity; my sole object was to expound Mendelssohn's view on faith.

The scoffing tone in which the critic sometimes indulges when speaking of things sacred to others—the Deity and religion—is, to say the least, astonishing. Undignified indeed are his utterances with regard to the Deity (p. 211), though it be only the Deity worshipped by me. Josephus, an historian of the age of barbarism, who was not writing in the nineteenth century, found in Exod. xxii. 27 the lesson that we must not revile the Deity worshipped by our neighbours. Even *The Jewish Religion*, whose "duties are merely so and so many laws" (page 234), and whose "virtue is broken up into small change" (*ibid.*), recommends "respect for the religious feelings of our fellow-men," and demands that "none should wound the feelings of members of another community in respect to anything they hold sacred." This lesson the book teaches both theoretically and practically; its author nowhere loses sight of it. I do not make this remark because I am the author of the book under discussion, but because it pains me exceedingly to find in a Jewish review ridicule and scoffing instead of argument and criticism.

There is a certain un-Jewish or even anti-Jewish spirit that permeates Mr. Montefiore's review. His knowledge of Judaism seems to have been obtained from other than Jewish sources; his contact with Jewish life seems too loose to produce a thorough understanding of that which fills the mind and heart of a faithful Israelite. I will illustrate what I say by a few examples. It is a well-known fact that it was not a difference of opinion about metaphysical or theological problems that brought about a rupture between the Jews and the early Christians. The

recognition on the one hand, and the rejection on the other, of the Pentateuch as a permanent code of laws for the Israelites formed the partition-wall between the two religions. The hostile position which the new religion took up against the Torah widened the breach. In the New Testament this hostility found full expression. Judaism, without the recognition of the Torah, has no *locus standi*, and the first words which a Jewish child is taught by its pious mother to utter are, therefore, the following:—*תורה רחמי אמונת* "May the Torah be my faithful companion." What has Mr. Montefiore to say on this point? He cries, "Laws, laws, laws! All through life, and even in death" (page 237). The term legalism, imported from a foreign land into the Jewish camp, is frequently met with, and Professor Butcher's authority is cited by Mr. Montefiore in support of his attack upon legalism. A splendid sentence of Professor Butcher's is quoted, "That though there are ten commandments in the Decalogue, there is still one Righteousness." What is its bearing, if admitted, on the recognition of the law as our truest guide? Does it not rather confirm our view, that the Ten Commandments—I only speak of Professor Butcher's dictum—are all based on Righteousness, and that we cannot do better than keep them all? Surely the repeated reproach of legalism is un-Jewish; it may have some meaning in the mouth of Paul, but in the mouth of a Jew it is an absurdity.

But what does the outcry against the laws mean? Can Mr. Montefiore live and exist without laws? Is not his very breathing and moving controlled by laws of nature? Would he feel safe in his home without the existence of laws? Can he move in society without adhering to the laws of the country and the dictates of custom? Can he write a single line without due regard for certain established rules of grammar, logic, and good sense? Why, then, bewail the existence of moral and religious precepts? The key to the lament is given by Mr. Montefiore—

"Perhaps those who have not lived under the law cannot properly criticise it" (page 238). This may be the reason why the utterance of King David, "The laws of God are upright, rejoicing the heart" (Ps. xix. 8), finds no echo in their heart. Hence it is impossible for Mr. Montefiore to understand the way in which the pious Jew seeks communion with God, or the delight he feels in reading the Word of God, and in meditating on it, whether it be his Word revealed in Exodus or his Word revealed in Leviticus and Numbers. The scoffing at the practice of the observant Jew of reading the Sidra, Text and Targum, on Friday evening, is by no means an act of righteousness, and is neither justified by the precepts of the Pentateuch nor by any set of ethical laws.

Mr. Montefiore asks: Is a person who has broken fifteen commandments necessarily more sinful than one who has broken ten? This question does not trouble us in the least. All that we are anxious to learn and to teach is this—what is right and what is wrong; what does our holy religion tell us to do, and what are we forbidden to do. We say with our forefathers, *נעשה ונשמע*. It is of no importance to us to know the degree of sinfulness of every sin. As soon as we discover that we have committed a sin, we do not examine of what kind or of what degree that sin is, but listen to the voice of our conscience that calls: Return. I have classified the Rabbinical laws in accordance with their origin, with the view of instructing those who wish to live accordingly. If anyone that seeks information in my book for the purpose of pulling down our religious edifice finds himself disappointed, I have no sympathy with him.

A very important element in Judaism is the belief in the Unity of God. To Mr. Montefiore "the Divine Unity seems to have become some fetish, of which no rational and soul-satisfying explanation can be given" (p. 214.) He admits that "in the sense that there is only one Divine Being, God's Unity is obvious." It is, in fact, in this sense, that we daily proclaim God as One; and in this sense we are

repeatedly told in the Bible, "He is God and there is none besides." But Unity in this sense, in the Jewish sense, does not satisfy Mr. Montefiore; it is "vague and negative." He is satisfied with Plato's definition of Unity as self-consistency and changelessness, and says, "that is precisely what Dr. Friedländer does not and cannot mean." But without giving it as the definition of Unity I do say precisely the same thing in my book, viz., "In declaring his Unity, we declare also his Immutability" (p. 45). But instead of taking into account what I actually say, Mr. Montefiore prefers to criticise what I do not say; for he sees "nothing but scholastic argumentations on the divine attributes, with indirect reference to the doctrine of the Trinity." Is it perhaps in my explanatory remark on the concluding words of the second principle, in which I find the expression of our belief that God never existed in a *double* form, that Mr. Montefiore finds reference to the *Trinity*? And would there be any harm if, in speaking of God's Unity, I expressly rejected Dualism and Trinity?

Again, in discussing my remarks on the eleventh article, Mr. Montefiore says, "what Dr. Friedländer is really combating when he so emphatically affirms that, if death is punishment, everyone dies for his own sin, is not the transmission of punishment by virtue of the solidarity of society, but the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement. Yet here in his opposition to Christianity he goes too far," etc.; "he neglects a most important ethical truth, which has both Biblical and Talmudical sanction: the virtue of self-sacrifice" (p. 223).

Why is Mr. Montefiore constantly on the look out for opposition to Christianity? I most emphatically declare that this was not my object when writing the book, not even when writing on Vicarious Atonement. It has really the appearance as if the article were written not with a view to state any shortcomings of mine with regard to the Jewish religion, but to defend Christianity from any real or suspected opposition on my part. As Mr. Montefiore himself

knows, we have in Jewish literature sufficient evidence to show that the idea of Vicarious Atonement was not altogether foreign to Jewish thought. Although the idea was held also by Jews I deny its correctness, and support my view by quotations from the Bible, without having any direct cause to attack Christianity. Equally erroneous is Mr. Montefiore's statement that antagonism to Christianity suggested my emendations in the A. V. of Is. liii. Nothing but grammar and context were my guides in the work of revising the A. V. As to the reason why the apparently righteous and innocent suffer and die, my view is clearly stated in *The Jewish Religion*. I declare it a mystery to the human mind, although we may *suggest* some explanations. I must leave it to those who profess to know better the plans of Divine Justice, to speak with greater exactness of things unknowable to me. But a word on the virtue of self-sacrifice. What is meant by the term? If it is the virtue of our sacrificing our wealth, health and life, in the interests of our fellow-men, it is a virtue generally accepted and practised by Jews and non-Jews alike; and is taught in *The Jewish Religion* under the various heads of duties towards our fellow-men. When after the death of a person, friends of the deceased express the wish that they had suffered death instead of him, or utter a desire to be the atonement for him, their wishes, though meaningless, have a justification. I can also understand the merit of those who voluntarily suffer pain with the purpose of setting to their fellow-men an example of patience and submission to the Will of God. But the virtue of one who shortens or destroys his life, without any known purpose, and merely in brooding and grieving over the sins of others, I cannot see; such an act is sinful, and perhaps the outcome of insanity. Our religion by no means recommends such self-sacrifice; it is practised neither by Jews nor by non-Jews, and seems to have been invented merely as a plausible explanation of the Vicarious Atonement or Vicarious Death in the Christian Faith.

Mr. Montefiore asks, Is a state of sin a merely Christian conception? It is certainly not a Jewish doctrine. We believe that we are not in a state of sin, unless we have actually sinned. Man has weaknesses, and is inclined to sin. To struggle against this inclination and to guard against falling into the snare of sin, is, from a Jewish point of view, our duty. My book is intended to be a guide and a help to everyone in this struggle. When man has sinned it is return from sin, *תשובה*, that can save him. I purposely avoided the term repentance; it is *תשובה* on which the Scriptures insist. The theory of *תשובה* is Jewish, and has therefore found a place in *The Jewish Religion*.

There are in Mr. Montefiore's review more questions and objections of this kind, but I pass them over in silence. It is but natural that a writer filled with anti-Jewish ideas should find in a book written from a Jewish point of view theories that are unintelligible to him, and teaching to which he objects. That I am not the only one that sees in this review, and in other articles written by Mr. Montefiore, an anti-Jewish tendency, becomes patent from the following fact: My attention was called to the table of contents of the February number of the *Review of Reviews*, and I noted the title: Are Jews becoming Christians?¹ I turned to page 159, when I saw that this was nothing but a reference to Mr. Montefiore's notes on the effects of Biblical criticism upon the Jewish religion.

Besides this un-Jewish tendency, Mr. Montefiore's standpoint from which he views religious faith and religious practice is admittedly widely different from mine. His supreme authority seems to be modern philosophy, mine is the teaching of Holy Writ. Mr. Montefiore says that I throw down the gauntlet to anything that savours of criticism, reform and progress (page 206). This is not the fact. I only oppose faulty criticism, destructive and retrogressive tendencies. Or am I expected to recognise *reform* in mere

¹ The title is supplemented on p. 159 by the words, "or Christians Jews," in small print.

disobedience to the Word of God revealed in the Scriptures, or any *progress* in mere opposition to the truths taught in the most trustworthy of books? Why should we have more confidence in the teaching of philosophy than in the teaching of revelation? Can Mr. Montefiore point even to one single problem concerning God, His attributes, His relation to the universe, and in particular to man, or concerning the object of man's existence, or concerning his life and death, that has been brought nearer its solution by the philosophical theories propounded by profound and learned thinkers up to the present day? Is not philosophy now, "in the nineteenth century," as far from the right solution of these problems as our remotest ancestors were in the very beginning of philosophical research? But if Mr. Montefiore thinks that I "do not greatly approve of philosophy" (page 206) he is mistaken. In love and regard for philosophy and science I yield to none, but I will not deceive myself in accepting as *final* such solutions as at best can only be proposed as suggestions or hypotheses, and of which from time to time "the old has to be removed because of the new."

Revelation is the only source that supplies true and permanent solutions to these transcendental problems, and it is through the Scriptures that we obtain a knowledge of the contents of Divine Revelation. "But do we know that it is so?" asks Mr. Montefiore. "How do we know that the Old Testament is the only genuine work? To this question Dr. Friedländer can give no rational answer" (page 208). Had Mr. Montefiore stopped here, I should have agreed with him; for I never pretend to prove that which is exclusively a matter of faith, and never attempt to pass the limits which the Almighty has set to our faculties (Comp. *The Jewish Religion*, page 6). Mr. Montefiore, however, continues: "But the worst of it is, that he does in a sort of way, attempt to give one, and lo, it is the old answer of the Jewish mediæval philosophers over again (*The Jewish Religion*, page 47). It is really amazing to find the circular argument, that because all Israel heard God's voice pro-

claiming the Ten Commandments, the trustworthiness of Moses was thereby tested and established for ever, revived in the nineteenth century." If Mr. Montefiore had read page 47 of my book, to which he refers, with a little more attention, he would have found that his statement has no other basis than his own imagination. *I* am speaking of the possibility of prophecy, and *he* attacks a proof which he fancies that I have given for the belief in the genuineness of the Scriptures. More than this. What he calls "the old answer of the Jewish mediæval philosophers," is a direct quotation from Exodus xix. 9, 11, and I am not at all ashamed that I am caught quoting the Bible "in the nineteenth century."

Mr. Montefiore asks, "Why not say frankly, I choose to believe the truth of the Bible, although I am unable to prove it?" I do say so. Turn to pages 2 and 6 of my book. He asks further, "Why not say frankly, I choose to believe it, although it be contrary to reason?" Simply because I do *not* believe so. I am convinced that the contradictions are only apparent; they disappear when thoroughly examined. What the Torah teaches is true, but, or rather, therefore, I am unwilling to shut my eye to the results of science. So long as the distinct line of demarcation between faith and reason (*The Jewish Religion*, pages 6 and 12) is not ignored, there is no fear of injury to either, and a complete reconciliation—not a half-and-half reconciliation, as Mr. Montefiore assumes—is obtained. When a contradiction presents itself to our mind, we must be mistaken, either in that which we believe to have been proved by reason, or in that which we believe to have been taught by Holy Writ; either the former is a mere hypothesis, and not a fully established fact, or our interpretation of a Biblical text is erroneous. The critic, ignoring this standpoint of mine, discovers contradictions in my book where there are none. See, *e.g.*, his review, page 212.

In order to show my estimate of Biblical criticisms, Mr. Montefiore (page 226) quotes the following "two categorical

statements":—1. "There is nothing in the Pentateuch that betrays a post-Mosaic origin"; 2. "There is no reason whatever to doubt the correctness of the headings" (of Psalms, Proverbs, Prophecies, etc.). These two categorical statements are the result of many years' earnest study. The arguments of sceptics and writers have up to this day always had my fullest attention. The more I see of these arguments the more am I confirmed in my principles. Mr. Montefiore may perhaps think that I do not approach criticism which proves to be hostile to the integrity and the authenticity of Biblical books with sufficient freedom; in fact, he speaks repeatedly of my "preconceived ideas." I do not deny the fact. My mind is not a *tabula rasa*; I have certain views, the result of education and training, which lead me in a certain direction: I have faith; and nothing but forcible and demonstrative arguments will ever cause me to turn into another direction. I unhesitatingly admit this. But I ask Mr. Montefiore whether he can conscientiously assert that he approaches questions of this kind without preconceived ideas, and examines with an unbiassed spirit opinions and explanations which are opposed to those to which he has been accustomed and which, therefore, appear to him natural?

Mr. Montefiore fears that homiletics and exegesis are in the class rooms of Jews' College frequently confounded (p. 227), and he authoritatively rejects explanations suggested by me of Biblical words and passages, because they seem strange to him. With authority it is difficult to argue. Has Mr. Montefiore, *e.g.*, before passing judgment on my explanation of עֵבֶר הִירְדָן, examined all passages in which the word עֵבֶר occurs, as I have done? Has he met with another explanation of the headings of Hab. iii., Ps. vii., etc., that is more satisfactory and more in harmony with grammar and context than the one suggested by ancient commentators and repeated by me? An impartial examination of my rendering of Biblical passages would have convinced him that they are without exception

based on the rules of grammar. As to the relation between homiletics and exegesis it is not impossible that they are at times confounded, there being no clear and distinct border between them, and what at one time appears to be the homiletical interpretation of a Biblical passage, is at another time found to be in fact its literal explanation. I nevertheless can assure Mr. Montefiore that the distinction between דרש and פשט is not ignored by the teachers of Jews' College.

In accordance with the different standpoints of *The Jewish Religion* and Mr Montefiore's review the conception of the Deity in the latter is different from the former. My conception of God is based on the teaching of the Scriptures; God is the Creator and the Ruler of the Universe, and by his decree phenomena appear and events occur which are contrary to human expectation, *i.e.*, miracles are wrought by him. According to the idea of Mr. Montefiore the Divine Being is bound to act according to certain laws established by human reason. This is by no means a new theory. Asaph in Ps. lxxviii. 41, speaking of the Israelites in the wilderness says, "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."

Mr. Montefiore asks whether Orthodox Judaism teaches an immanent or a transcendent God, or a God who is at the same time both. As Orthodox Judaism has no God of its own, I cannot answer this question. What, however, Judaism teaches is clearly set forth in my book. I am by no means "silent upon this momentous question," although I do not employ such philosophical terms as Immanent and Transcendent. The doctrine that although God is omnipresent, and his power and wisdom permeate everything we notice, the things themselves are not identical with the Deity, is expounded in my book (pp. 22 *sqq.*), and Mr. Montefiore's wish that a doctrine implying Immanence and Transcendence should be presented to the enlightened Jew has thus, to some extent

been anticipated. To demonstrate how these two opposites are combined in One Being is beyond human power.

Equally impossible it is to prove the coexistence of God's omniscience and man's freewill. This is a problem too difficult for us to solve, it is one of the hidden things that belong to the Lord our God. This is the teaching of *The Jewish Religion* (page 149). Mr. Montefiore, quoting from the same page, ignores this plain statement, and thinks it necessary to blame me for not imitating the boldness of the Mishnaic sage, who said, Everything is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given" (page 215). But first, there is no boldness in the saying; secondly, the translation "foreseen" is inaccurate, the original for it is צפרי which simply means "seen," and the Mishnaic sage probably did not intend to state a philosophical problem, but to emphasise the lesson that our actions are watched by an all-seeing eye, although the wicked continue in wickedness without restraint, as if there was no judgment and no retribution (לית דין ולית דין). The same mistake Mr. Montefiore repeats still more emphatically on page 216.

The different conceptions of the Deity lead naturally to different opinions about the nature of prayer. Prayer in a wider sense is used of all communion with God, including petition, which is the original meaning of the term. The basis of a petition is the belief that the being addressed has it in his power to grant the petition; it would be contrary to all logic and common sense to pray to any being for something which that being is unable to grant or to refuse. Mr. Montefiore has a different conception of prayer. According to his view, prayer must not anticipate a change in God, who is immutable. Exclude from our prayer all material wants, restrict it to spiritual things, even to the words, May thy will be done. What force or meaning can be in our *prayer*, if the will or decree of God is immutable and *must* be done? Whatever phrases and paraphrases may be used in defining the word prayer, if you analyse them you will find in them the idea of a petition, the granting of which

is believed to be exclusively in the hands of him to whom the petition is addressed. I admit that prayer purifies the soul, ennobles the heart, elevates us and brings us nearer to our Creator; I admit all this, but as a prayer it still retains its original meaning as taught in the Bible. The contradiction between prayer and God's Immutability is only a fiction; we choose to define God's Immutability as identical with the stability of the law of nature, and deny the efficacy of prayer because of this definition. Define it as the immutability of his kindness and justice, his wisdom and his omnipotence, and the contradiction will disappear.

Mr. Montefiore thinks that there are serious omissions in *The Jewish Religion*, he misses in the book all reference to sin and repentance, to the virtue of self-sacrifice, and to Immanence and Transcendence; but I have shown in the above that these subjects were duly and fully considered in my book. Mr. Montefiore further finds in the book "two moral blots" (page 242). First, my opinion that a divorce may take place when man and wife are a source of trouble and misery the one to the other. Mr. Montefiore thinks that I ought to have clearly stated that only when the trouble is caused by adultery should divorce be granted. Even if I thought so, the explanation would not be necessary. According to *The Jewish Religion* (page 488), the religious acts of marriage and divorce should only take place in accordance with the laws of the State. I am, however, unable to see the morality of the law laid down by Mr. Montefiore, that man and wife, who, from any cause whatsoever, are unhappy in each other's company, should be doomed to unhappiness all their life-time.

The second moral blot is my statement of the fact that the issue of mixed marriages are, before the tribunal of our Religion, which does not recognise such marriages, illegitimate. The term, I admit, sounds rather harsh. But where such marriage is not recognised, the children are naturally considered as born out of wedlock. Mixed marriages are

a growing evil in the Jewish community, and silence on this point would be cowardice.

Finally, Mr. Montefiore says (page 244) that that which is wanting in my book is Hellenism. The combination of Hebraism and Hellenism, which Mr. Montefiore recommends on the authority of Professor Butler, has been tried two thousand years ago, and has proved a failure. Orthodox or not orthodox, the Jews are not prevented by their religion from acquiring the culture of the time. The Jews have always "freely mixed with the big outer world, and with the wide stream of general civilisation"—a fact entirely ignored by Mr. Montefiore. But there is no necessity or desirability to introduce into Judaism foreign or even antagonistic elements. Judaism, based on Revelation, cannot be arbitrarily modified. That it has vitality, the past has proved; it has been victorious in spite of many hard trials, and I have the firm conviction that the present trials will likewise pass away without injury to Judaism, for *זרע קדש מצברתה* (Is. vi. 13).

M. FRIEDLÄNDER.
